UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

PROGRAMME: No. 580, recorded 3 February 1995

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DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES

JI CHAOZHU, Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS), explains how this specialized unit advises and assists third world countries in their development efforts to achieve social progress and better standards of life. It relies on a large number of advisers who may be sent to developing countries, upon request, to provide short-term technical advice and training. DDSMS also helps countries identify, select and purchase the most appropriate goods and equipment for their development projects. Mr. Ji believes that, while democracy is an important element for achieving economic and social progress, the world community should neither interfere in the internal affairs of a country nor impose upon it a particular type of democracy.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration:	28:01"
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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

Since its establishment 50 years ago, the United Nations has endeavoured to maintain peace and security among the nations of the world as well as to help them achieve economic and social development. The United Nations and its family of organizations and agencies have long played a key role in providing technical cooperation to stimulate development, especially in third world countries. Has the United Nations role as an agent for technical cooperation changed in the post-cold war era?

Our guest today is Ji Chaozhu, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services. Joining me to talk with Mr. Ji are Ian Williams of *The New York Observer* and Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service. Mr. Ji, welcome to World Chronicle.

Let's ask the question again: Has the United Nations role as an agent for technical cooperation changed in the post-cold war era?

JI: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Michael Littlejohns. It is an honour indeed to be interviewed here. I watch your programme very frequently. I would say indeed, of course it has changed, and it will continue to change over the years, because the whole world is changing. And it is in precisely that spirit that the Secretary-General has launched his very far-reaching reforms. And in that process of launching the reforms, he has noted that basically there are three main concerns to be addressed in this present day with regard to economic and social sectors of the UN's work in these fields. And they are: One, how to have an organization which would better serve ECOSOC -- the Economic and Social Council; to insure that the new Commission for Sustainable Development makes a major contribution to bolstering ECOSOC's responsibilities; and also to promote coherence and coordination. The second is how to strengthen a centre of excellence in the elaboration of economic and social data and analysis of national and regional development trends, and the international interactions. And thirdly, how to strengthen a centre of excellence in the provision -- at the request of Member States, and subject to the availability of funds -- of impartial and politically unconditional technical assistance to meet priority needs of developing countries and countries in transition.

LITTLEJOHNS: How does your Department [for Development Support and Management Services] deal with these problems, Mr. Ji?

JI: Well, let me go right into that. That is the very nexus of what we do in this provision of technical cooperation. It's in essence to help the recipients help themselves in

ways they feel are fit for themselves, particularly in the fields of good public management, because we are the principal operational arm of the UN Secretariat and the focal point at Headquarters here for facilitating and supporting technical cooperation to meet priority needs of the recipient States. Our work consists primarily of holding seminars and workshops, either sponsored by us alone or in conjunction with concerned governments and/or other concerned UN entities, and also the provision of advisory services and the recruitment and procurement of specialists and equipment for various projects which we are asked to undertake. Now, we are funded both by the regular budget and through extra-budgetary resources, which could be from various financial institutions, or by funding organizations, the private sector, and also by providing services.

LITTLEJOHNS: How many countries are you servicing at the moment, would you say?

JI: At the moment I would say close to 100 countries.

LITTLEJOHNS: Really? Is Africa your main focus, or is it --

JI: Indeed they are, because they are in most need, especially of how to better manage their economies. But in addition to that, the transitional economies are also a major part of our endeavour. So if I may very briefly tell you exactly what we're doing in some very important fields of endeavour: For instance, talking about Africa, most African countries are undertaking national economic adjustment programmes in collaboration with various financial institutions. Now, these programmes are essential, but at the same time they could have negative effects on vulnerable groups. And so the thing is how to set up various social safety nets --

LITTLEJOHNS: When you say "vulnerable groups", what are these "vulnerable groups"?

JI: Well, for instance, for the past many decades, especially during the cold war days, many African states were following the Soviet model and had centrally-planned economies which were very inefficient. In order to increase their efficiency, they have to move more towards private sector development. But in so doing, there will obviously be a surplus of labour power; there will even be surplus industries. Then what happens to these people? That is a very major concern of ours, in Africa and in these transitional economies as well, and much of our work is devoted there, with regard to these transitional --

WILLIAMS: You're speaking as though the structural adjustment programmes are sort of unconditionally accepted, and in fact there's been a lot of criticism. UNICEF produced figures saying that the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes cost the lives of 6 million children a year in the third world, precisely because the whole point of them is to create vulnerable groups, to create unemployment, to lower wage levels, to reduce government spending on education and welfare and generally to throw open these economies to the icy

blasts of world trade. Now, many of the agencies are very unhappy with these structural adjustment programmes. Are you convinced that they are working?

JI: I am very pleased you asked that question, because what we are doing is precisely to try to offset the negative impact of what these other organizations are doing. And so it's really, in one sense, a question of partnership, and, in another, it is to try to offset adverse effects. That is one thing. The other thing is very different from the Bretton Woods institutions. Everything we do is only at the specific request of the Member States, and they must tell us exactly what they would like us to do. If they say, "Look, we need World Bank assistance in this respect. We're doing this, but look what's happening to our work force. What can you do about that?", that is where we will come in. We will talk with them, and, for instance, hold workshops, seminars, or even provide advisory services just to say how to help organize those who might be unemployed to set up their own small businesses, or whatever, to offset the adverse impacts of these market-oriented reforms.

WILLIAMS: But you're still saying -- about the market-oriented reforms, you're accepting them, whereas from my looking at the world around me, I see -- in Japan, in Korea, in Singapore, in China itself, and even in the United States -- industries flourish between high protectionist barriers with lots of government support, with government direction, and with heavy spending on education and welfare. And this is precisely the opposite of what the developing countries are being told to do. So in a sense they're being told to ignore the successful models and follow a theoretical model which has a very, very bad success rate across the world.

JI: This is the question, the "doctrine of the mean", according to Confucius. And that is to say never go to extremes in anything. The highly centrally-planned model was obviously a failure, but the 19th century laissez-faire system was no good either. The thing is how to have a proper balance. And that, I think, is what the UN tries to do, because the UN -- all the systems from the UN must be, by very definition, totally impartial, neutral, and may act only at the specific request of Member States. And if in the process of carrying out a project the Member State feels that we're doing things not to their liking, they can tell us at any moment and we will immediately change in accordance with their request. But having said that, of course, we still have to recognize that what so many countries pursued in the past, a highly centralized economy, just isn't the way to do things. But we cannot go back to 19th century laissez-faire.

DEEN: Mr. Ji, turning to another question, your Department has a roster of some 4,000 consultants and experts.

JI: Yes.

DEEN: And they're mostly working, I believe, in developing countries.

JI: Yes.

DEEN: But some of these developing countries say that what you pay these consultants is almost one third of what you pay for consultants from industrial countries, and they call this a form of apartheid or a form of discrimination. How do you explain this?

JI: Well, with regard to the pay that we give to our consultants, our purpose is to give the maximum benefit to the recipients, for one thing. The other thing is to be as fair as possible when we look for consultants throughout the world; that is to say to try as much as possible to get consultants, advisors and experts from the developing world.

LITTLEJOHNS: From the developing world?

JI: From the developing world.

DEEN: Are they mostly from the developing world, or just some?

JI: Well, it depends. You see, it's a question of a pay-off. Those from the developing world, some of them are super outstanding, but some of them may not be quite up to the grade of someone, say, from the United States of America. But those from the USA will be far more expensive. UN funds are very limited. So we have to get the most cost-effective adviser we can in order to be of greater service to the recipients. That also concerns how better to serve the recipient States.

LITTLEJOHNS: So do you have different salary scales according to nationality?

JI: Oh, not at all. We pay them according to what kind of service they provide, but there is a question of competition. Let us say you're from the UK, sir; you might be from the subcontinent, or wherever; let's say you're from Japan. Now, the Japanese want a higher salary; you, pretty high; you, very reasonable; and the expertise is more or less the same. We also believe in market principles, but first of all we want quality advice, quality service. And of these 4,000 or so, we know them, and they know us.

DEEN: Yes. I was told of a Nigerian expert who was in a university in the United States.

JI: Yes.

DEEN: He was hired for some $300 a day. But he went back to Nigeria, and they wanted to rehire him to complete his project, and they were willing to pay only some $50 or $60 a day.

JI: Yes. Oh, precisely. Well, these countries, they are poor themselves. And I would say, really, with deep respect for these experts, that the overwhelming majority of them really want to serve the international community. I think they're there really not to make a bunch of money; they want to serve, like us at UN headquarters.

WILLIAMS: If we could get back to some of the basic principles, you are perhaps in a sense the administrative arm of ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Committee.

LITTLEJOHNS: Council.

WILLIAMS: Council. Sorry, yes. Which was at one time almost envisioned as the sort of economic and social equivalent of the Security Council. It was going to be a major decision-making body on how the world economy was restructured after 1945. And then, we already mentioned that the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and IMF, run away and set up shop on their own. Now, you mentioned that part of your job is coherence and coordination. There are some 36 UN agencies and programmes involved in development, often overlapping, some of them fiercely competing, almost to the point of open warfare. Some countries might have some 23 different UN agencies and organizations working with them on development. Can you do anything seriously to coordinate these, short of the wholesale closing down of some and merging of others?

JI: That's an extremely important point that you just mentioned, but I'm afraid I probably did not state my case very clearly at the very beginning. When I mentioned three basic concerns, I was trying to say that that is the reason why the Secretary-General established three distinct Departments for economic and social matters. So that the Department that deals with ECOSOC is another Department [for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development], headed by Mr. Nitin Desai, and that is not really my responsibility. That is the responsibility of Mr. Nitin Desai, the Under-Secretary-General who is in charge of this job. As for coordination, however, that indeed has always been a problem, almost from the inception of the UN, and indeed there is a question of overlap, but also a question of collaboration and coordination. And for that very reason the Secretary-General not too long ago appointed the Administrator of UNDP, Mr. Gus Speth, to assist him.

LITTLEJOHNS: The UN Development Programme.

JI: The UN Development Programme, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme, to assist him in coordination of the system, especially the different entities at headquarters.

WILLIAMS: This was a move that was fiercely resisted by some of the colleagues who are heads of other agencies. There are sort of bureaucratic turf wars breaking out about this decision.

LITTLEJOHNS: Excuse me just a moment. This is World Chronicle. Our guest is Ji Chaozhu, UN Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services. Mr. Ji.

JI: I think the phrase "fiercely resisted" is an exaggeration, really, because we are all here for the sole purpose of serving Member States. And in so doing, some of us may become over enthusiastic. We know our own organization better than anyone else's organization, and we want to help, they want to help, he wants to help, we all want to help, and sometimes we're

getting into each other's hair. And therefore there needs to be set up a mechanism whereby we will consult one another on a more or less regular basis. And that is what, again, the Secretary-General has done. He first started out with a very nice and enjoyable way of doing this, by having us under-secretaries-general in charge of economic and social matters here in headquarters invite each other to lunch. And so, immediately, it was a wonderful thing. Chinese food is world-renowned, Indian food is world renowned also, French food is superb --

LITTLEJOHNS: British food not quite so well known.

JI: American food is not too bad either. And so we took turns. But now we have become even more organized in having poorer fare, just sandwiches, but still regular meetings chaired by our friend Gus Speth, Administrator of UNDP, to talk about these things so as to better coordinate our actions.

DEEN: Mr. Ji.

JI: Yes?

DEEN: Your Department also provides assistance to least developed countries, the LDCs --

JI: Yes.

DEEN: -- who are categorized as the poorest of the poor. I do not know how far you have succeeded in this, because about 10 or 15 years ago there were only 20, 22 LDCs, and now there are 47. And there's only one country, I believe, which has graduated -- Botswana. And they keep on adding more and more countries.

JI: I would say that is quite right, and it is really deplorable. But I have to emphasize one thing, and that is that the UN, of course, is the most important international organization in the world, obviously. However, one cannot expect the UN to do everything. In the final analysis, it is only the governments and the countries themselves that can uplift themselves. The UN can only help. But having said that, I would, at the risk of not being too modest, say we have been making an impact with some of the poorest of the poor. And I'm going to cite the example of Bhutan. Now, Bhutan, as you know, is very small, utterly poverty stricken. The overwhelming majority of their civil service are expatriots, and there are only a few dozen, really, of their own nationals in their own government. And we have been engaged in a major project there, $11 million in all, funded by the United Nations Development Programme, executed by my Department. And now we've been able to develop a considerably large corps of trained personnel, of Bhutanese, who are dealing with strategic areas of development. And we have also instituted a management system to assist in the training of staff. And they're well on the way to at least insuring that the majority of their senior officials dealing with the development of Bhutan are Bhutanese. And I think that is already an achievement. But for an organization like the UN, with its extremely limited resources, we cannot possibly expect it to

really uplift all the LDCs. We can only do what I say is our utmost in helping them to help themselves.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Ji, would you say that lack of management skills is the main problem in these countries?

JI: I would think that is one of the major problems, and that is why public administration is now a top priority in the work of my own Department. In 1996, there's going to be a special session of the General Assembly which will be devoted totally to the question of public administration. Last year, in June, there was held in Morocco a conference of the ministers of civil service of a couple of dozen African States in which the question of how to improve the civil service was discussed at length. And all the African ministers who attended found it most useful. And that is the reason why there is now going to be a special UN General Assembly session on --

LITTLEJOHNS: But what can the General Assembly do to improve management in Bhutan?

JI: Well, that, you see, is a question of exchange of experience. There are two things about the UN: One is that the UN can never and will never interfere in the internal affairs of another country. We cannot tell other countries, "Now, look, your country's doing well, his country's doing well, his country's doing badly, so you must adopt what they're doing." We could never do that. But we could bring you guys together and have each of you present your case, and, even though you're doing your work much better than he is, he may have one or two subjects in which he's doing much better than you guys, and that would be of help to you as well. And that is what we do.

DEEN: But Mr. Ji, on this question of public administration, at the last General Assembly session there was a proposal to have a major UN conference, but it was shut down.

JI: Yes. Well, that again is precisely because of the quite correct concerns of a number of countries that the UN, as a universal inter-governmental organization, should never even hint at trying to tell other Member States what is the best model for public administration. But on the other hand, the UN as a forum, if dealt with properly, could be a very good place to exchange views and to find out what might be helpful. But what might be helpful can be controversial, too. Because what he's doing, which is very helpful to him, might be very helpful to you, too, but not at all helpful to him because of different cultural backgrounds or other -- religious backgrounds, or whatever. But as a forum where successful experience could be exchanged, that could be very helpful.

My own Department held a series of seminars called African Development and the Asian Experience, and that was very much appreciated by African States, because, look, several decades ago many Asian countries were also in the depths of poverty, but they have come up

now. Why? Well, some commonalities were discovered. One of them was emphasis on primary education, on basic health, on basic --

WILLIAMS: All the sectors the World Bank cuts when it comes to structural adjustment programmes.

JI: Well, that is up to the World Bank, and indeed, where such problems arise, then we, the UN, at the request of recipient countries, will try to do our level best.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Ji, there was a recent report about the role of women and the fact that women are not being given the opportunities they should have in the higher echelons of administrations, both private and public. Beijing is going to be the host of an important conference on women later in 1995 [Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September]. Is your Department recommending a greater employment of women in policy-making and management jobs?

JI: Well, so far as my own Department is concerned, I've always made a special point of trying to promote women to the most senior posts.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm talking about in your client countries.

JI: Yes. For my own Department, that's the case. As far as client countries, certainly that is the case. When we talk about disadvantaged groups, too often the case is women belong to that category. And also too often it's the case whereby women work the hardest, but yet are paid the lowest. And that is where we are always at the forefront, trying to devise ways whereby such a situation could be alleviated. My own Department has had, for many years, a voluntary task force: Women in Development. In fact, it's the oldest in the UN system. It continues to operate and will be playing a very important role in the upcoming conference in Beijing.

WILLIAMS: UNDP has caused a ruckus in past years by trying to draw a connection between development and accountability of public servants through democracy. Does your Department have any programmes on democratization? Or is this counting as interference in Member States?

JI: Well, we certainly have a very important role with regard to the holding of democratic elections in countries where there has been any kind of election whatsoever: first, Angola; the last election in Haiti, which unfortunately was aborted, but now there will be elections again; and a number of other countries, too, in the tactical aspects of elections. But, again, this is all done only at the specific request of the Member States. And as for democracy, we would never think about trying to emphasize what particular form of democracy is the best, even among the western democracies. There's a tremendous difference, as I'm sure you are aware, between British democracy and American democracy and French democracy. This is a question of democracy for countries with multiparty systems. And then there are countries

which have only one party, but these countries consider themselves democracies. It's a question of another way of democracy. It is not for us, I feel, and certainly not for the UN as a whole, to say that you must have this particular model of democracy. But democracy is a concept whereby the people should have a say in how their affairs are run by their government. That I think is a universal idea.

DEEN: What about human rights as a condition for development assistance? Which is very, very controversial.

JI: Well, human rights are a basic of the UN Charter. And certainly that's something which we must attach the greatest importance to. And there are, of course, objective conditions whereby you can say there are some violations or non-violations of human rights. But as to making human rights a condition, it is again a very delicate question, and one which we must look at very carefully, because different countries have different interpretations of what human rights are. And while there's general agreement that torture and genocide are outright violations of human rights, how you treat a particular prisoner guilty of a particular offense is very different in different countries, and it's not for us to say what they should do or what they should not do.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Ji, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of World Chronicle.

Our guest has been Ji Chaozhu, UN Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services. He was interviewed by Ian Williams of *The New York Observer* and Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

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